

Life with God  
A 20 session Study

**Section Two: Beginning Life with God**

Study Four: Beginning the journey with God by understanding Jesus' work.

Study Five: Initial Steps of Faith

Study Six: The Role of the Holy Spirit

Study Seven: Dealing with Opposition when the enemy attacks

## Life With God

Study Four: Beginning the Journey with God by Understanding Jesus' Work.

**Follow Up from Study Three:** Taking a long look at heaven can be kind of difficult. The glimpses we get in the Scripture are so different than our day-to-day experience. The book of Revelation is at best a bit confusing with all of the imagery and events it describes. You kind of want a nice chart all laid out with a timeline. But despite the difficulties of understanding heaven, the picture we do get is that God has an eternal future in mind for us filled with incredible interaction with Him. Here are the practical exercises from the third study. Share which one you did with the group and what you experienced as you did it.

1. Memorize Colossians 3: 1 - 4. Meditate on what it means to set your mind on the things above.
2. Pray Revelation 5 before the Lord asking him to bring people from all nations to him. Use this as a chance to pray for our missionaries and for areas that have no missionaries.
3. Spend some time worshipping Jesus with the words used in Revelation 5 giving him honor for what He has accomplished for us.

**Introduction to Study Four:** A simple outline of the first three sessions might look like this.

1. Things started well.
2. Things went terribly wrong.
3. God restores things in the end.

The question before us in this study is how does God restore all things? The story begins all the way back in Genesis when God makes a promise to Adam and Eve. However it is explained by Jesus in terms that we don't use much today as we "share the gospel". During this session you will look at a number of scripture passages that speak of Jesus' work. This session coupled with the fifth study will deepen our appreciation of who Jesus is and what He has done. It will also give us multiple ways to talk about the "gospel."

1. **Read Genesis 3: 14- 15.** Normally “seed” refers to the offspring of men. The expression “seed of the woman” would be unusual. Who do you think this is referring to? What do you think is meant by the reference to bruising the head and bruising the heel?
2. **Read the “I AM” statements in the gospel of John:** In each of the verses Jesus makes a statement beginning with “I am”. As you look at each one, discuss these questions.
  - a. What does Jesus say He is?
  - b. What does Jesus say to do about this statement? (He talks about coming, or eating, etc.)
  - c. What is the result if someone will respond that way?

**Passages:**

John 6: 48 – 51

John 8: 12

John 9: 5

John 10: 7 – 10

John 10: 11 – 15

John 11: 25 – 26

John 14: 6

John 15: 1-5

3. **Read Philippians 3: 8 – 11.** Where did Paul say his faith was? In what way do we “get” the righteousness of Jesus?
4. **Discuss this statement.** Our faith is not so much in an agreement or arrangement that God has made, but in a living person (Jesus) who we are trusting to be right about everything.

**Summary:** There are all kinds of ways to think about salvation. We often use court room analogies that reflect some kind of judicial process. We sinned. Jesus paid the “fine”. We get off. The question then becomes how does this “payment” get applied to my account. But in all of the metaphors Jesus used to describe himself, there was a much more interactive and relational component. He said words like follow me; abide in me; go in through me. Maybe the most difficult of all of these statements was eat my body and drink my blood. What emerges from these images is that Jesus is calling us to trust HIM. Yes, He did pay the penalty. Yes, God is righteous in all He does. But it isn’t a legal contract I am trusting. I am trusting God. I am trusting Jesus. We could make this distinction. If I am going to a concert I need a ticket to get in. There is no relationship with the person at the door. If my ticket passes scrutiny, I am in. But eternal life is relational.

When I used to travel to my parents' house to visit them, I wasn't worried about needing a ticket to get inside.

### **Practical Exercises**

1. Pick one of the "I am" statements of Jesus to meditate on this week. Pray through the passage and ask the Lord to teach you something about who Jesus is.
2. Ask the Lord to give you a chance to talk to one person about his/her relationship with God this week. See who he brings into your life.
3. Make a list of what you are currently trusting Jesus about. Think about what should be on your list but isn't.

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## Study Five: Initial Steps of Faith

**Follow up from Study Four:** There is a great beauty and simplicity about the invitations Jesus gives to us in the gospel of John. Each of the “I am” statements draws us closer to Jesus. One of the things that emerges from these metaphors is the intensely relational nature of our faith. Take some time to share what you did as a practical exercise from the last study before you begin Study Five. Here they are as a reminder.

### Practical Exercises from Study Four:

4. Pick one of the “I am” statements of Jesus to meditate on this week. Pray through the passage and ask the Lord to teach you something about who Jesus is.
5. Ask the Lord to give you a chance to talk to one person about his/her relationship with God this week. See who he brings into your life.
6. Make a list of what you are currently trusting Jesus about. Think about what should be on your list but isn't.

**Introduction to Study Five:** The “I am” statements of Jesus are truly attractive. They invite us into an intimate relationship with Him. A natural question then is, “How does one take the initial steps in this relationship?” There are two familiar terms used in the New Testament that may be helpful to determine this. One is *belief* and the other *eternal life*.

1. The Greek word translated as believe is the word *pistos*. Here is the definition from the Greek Lexicon for that word.

*“believe, believe in, have confidence (in someone or something), entrust (something to another.)*

Talk about someone you have confidence in, other than Jesus. How does the confidence affect your relationship?

2. Read Hebrews 11: 1, 6. Try to describe faith in these verses without using the word *believe*. Think about what it is that pleases God.
3. Read James 2: 19. How is the word *believe* being used in this verse about the demons? What is different between their belief and a disciple's belief?
4. Read John 6: 47. What does Jesus promise the one who believes?
5. If someone asked you what does *eternal life* mean, how would you answer them?
6. Read John 17: 3. How does Jesus explain *eternal life* in this verse?
7. After reading John 17: 3 when do you think eternal life begins?

8. How would you know that you have eternal life? (After your initial answers check out these verses.)
  - a. 1 John 5: 11 – 13
  - b. Romans 8: 22, 23

**Summary:** Once you have been around Christian circles for any length of time, the words *faith* and *belief* can become difficult to explain. We use them so often that it isn't always clear what we mean. But if we substitute the word *confidence* it can help. Jesus is asking us to have confidence in Him as a person. We have confidence that He is everything He said He was... the Son of God. And we have confidence He did everything that needs to be done to bring us back to God. Eternal life is one of the ways the Scriptures describe this life. As we saw though in John 17, it isn't about an endless number of days. Certainly the picture we get of heaven is about a "forever" with God. But it isn't just the quantity in question. It is also about the quality. It is life with God. So eternal life isn't something that begins in the future when I die; it actually begins when I place my confidence in Jesus Christ. I can know that I have this life because something is working in me, the Holy Spirit. We will study more on that in the next study.

**Practical Exercises:**

1. Reflect on the time you became a believer. What were the circumstances? What was the reason you gave your life to Jesus? Did this study on faith and eternal life add anything to what you originally were told? Write about this in your journal.
2. Express to Jesus in prayer what you trust Him for. Be honest with Him about what is easy to trust Him for and what is more difficult. If you have never told Jesus that you are trusting Him for eternal life, and would like to, now would be a great time to do that. Ask him to come into your life and begin to do His work.
3. Ask God to allow you to talk with one person about Jesus this week.

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## Study Six: The Holy Spirit

**Follow up from Study Five:** Initial steps with Jesus are always an exciting time. There is so much to learn and discover about life with God. We know from our relationships with other people that it takes time to learn to trust someone. So too, there is a time factor in learning to have confidence in Jesus. One of the exercises from last time was to reflect on when you became a believer or follower of Jesus. Have each person briefly share their story. Here are the rest of the exercises as a reminder as well. Feel free to share anything you learned or experienced from the other exercises too.

### Practical Exercises from Study Five:

4. Reflect on the time you became a believer. What were the circumstances? What was the reason you gave your life to Jesus? Did this study on faith and eternal life add anything to what you originally were told? Write about this in your journal.
5. Express to Jesus in prayer what you trust Him for. Be honest with Him about what is easy to trust Him for and what is more difficult. If you have never told Jesus that you are trusting Him for eternal life, and would like to, now would be a great time to do that. Ask him to come into your life and begin to do His work.
6. Ask God to allow you to talk with one person about Jesus this week.

**Introduction to Study Six:** There was a radical change in the life of the disciples after the day of Pentecost. Jesus spoke in Acts 1:8 of them receiving power. He also spoke of the Holy Spirit coming upon them. It is safe then to connect their life change with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Any understanding of the life God is calling us to live has to be rooted in understanding the Holy Spirit's role in our life. Discuss the following passages and questions about the Holy Spirit.

1. Read John 14: 16, 17
  - a. What does Jesus call the Holy Spirit?
  - b. Who sends the Holy Spirit?
  - c. What is He going to do when He comes?
  - d. What prepositions are used with the Holy Spirit in relationship to us? (words like in, with, etc.) What do these words suggest in this passage?
2. Read John 14: 25, 26
  - a. What does this passage say the Holy Spirit is going to do when He comes?
  - b. What else does it say about Him?
3. Read John 16: 7 – 14. Try to list or mention all of the different things this passage has to say about what the Spirit does in us and in the world.
4. Read Luke 12: 12. What promise does Jesus make to His disciples in this passage? Describe how this promise might help you in some of the situations you face.
5. Read Ephesians 1: 13. What does this passage say about when we receive the Holy Spirit?

6. Read Ephesians 4: 30 and 1 Thessalonians 5: 19. What do you think it means to grieve the Holy Spirit? What do you think it means to quench the Holy Spirit?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 6: 19, 20. What do you think it means that your body is a “temple?”
8. Read Acts 1:8. What power do you think we receive from the Holy Spirit?

**Summary:** There are many passages about the role of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures. Jesus makes it clear that by His leaving earth and sending the Spirit, we would be better off. While on earth, Jesus was limited to being in one place at one time. But the Spirit is free to move through out the whole earth and indwell countless numbers of believers. As He indwells us, He teaches us and empowers us to live for God. We didn't have time to focus on the joy and peace aspects of His presence in our lives, but they are equally important. His presence is a part of the interactive relationship God desires to have with us. The Spirit is with us and in us. Although we can certainly ignore His presence or do things that make Him sad, we can also learn to listen to Him and follow His directions. Certainly He wants to give us the right words for those outside the faith. He also wants to empower us to live our lives for God. This is part of our maturing process, learning how to do things “in the Spirit”, rather than “in the flesh”.

**Practical Exercises:**

1. Pray about your relationship with the Holy Spirit. First, read Luke 11: 13. In this passage, Jesus tells a parable and then draws a conclusion. He says if we are evil and know how to give good gifts, then won't God give us the Holy Spirit if we ask Him. When you became a believer in Jesus Christ, God gave you the Spirit. But you can ask him to help you understand His presence in your life. Ask the Lord to fill you with His presence.
2. Meditate on God's Kingdom. Read Romans 14: 17. Reflect on the three words used to describe the Kingdom of God and their connection with the Holy Spirit in this passage.
3. Ask God to give you an opportunity to speak to someone in a way that relies on the Holy Spirit. (You don't have to ask to be thrown in prison to experience this.)

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## Study Seven: Facing Opposition

### Review from Study Six:

One of the amazing aspects of our life with God is that He actually chooses to reside in us. The Holy Spirit is the promised seal of our relationship. Take some time to share your experiences with the exercises from the Sixth Study. In particular, share any opportunity you have had to speak with someone who is not yet a believer. Here are the exercises as a reminder.

4. Pray about your relationship with the Holy Spirit. First, read Luke 11: 13. In this passage, Jesus tells a parable and then draws a conclusion. He says if we are evil and know how to give good gifts, then won't God give us the Holy Spirit if we ask Him. When you became a believer in Jesus Christ, God gave you the Spirit. But you can ask Him to help you understand His presence in your life. Ask the Lord to fill you with His presence.
5. Meditate on God's Kingdom. Read Romans 14: 17. Reflect on the three words used to describe the Kingdom of God and their connection with the Holy Spirit in this passage.
6. Ask God to give you an opportunity to speak to someone in a way that relies on the Holy Spirit. (You don't have to ask to be thrown in prison to experience this.)

### Introduction to Study Seven:

We are all familiar with opposition. There are many days we could describe with the phrase "things just weren't going my way today." As believers trying to live life with God, we will encounter a variety of forms of opposition. It is important to identify the source of the opposition so that we can deal with it appropriately. The questions are broken into three categories. You will want to spend some time with each of them.

#### **Sometimes the opposition is me.**

1. Reflect on 1 Peter 2: 11 and James 1: 13 -16. What is it that "wars" against our souls? What is the source for that?
2. How does Galatians 5:17, 18 address this? What works within us to aid us in this opposition?
3. Reflect on these verses: Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4: 22 – 24; Hebrews 12: 1 – 3. What practical steps can you think of that act on the instructions in these verses? How will that aid us with the opposition our own flesh creates?

#### **Sometimes the opposition is other people.**

1. Reflect on John 15: 18, 19; 1 John 3: 13. What can we expect from other people if we start living for Jesus?

2. Read 2 Timothy 2: 23 -26. How should we respond to people who oppose us? What does this passage say about them that will help us be more patient with them?

### **Sometimes the opposition consists of spiritual forces.**

1. Read Ephesians 6: 10 – 12. There is an exhortation and an explanation in these verses. What are we exhorted to do? Why? How is the opposition described?
2. Read Ephesians 6:13 – 19. What are the weapons available to us for this conflict? What do you think each of them is? Where is the battle fought? How do we put on this armor?

### **Summary:**

Sometimes our struggles are with ourselves. We need to understand that we are a forgiven people who are not on a “performance” track with God. He loves us and accepts us. But we also need to change our mindset from a “fleshly” one to a “spiritual” one. Part of our struggles is in making this transition. A study of Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 is fruitful for this area.

Sometimes we have people who bother us. It can range from minor irritation all the way to hostile confrontation that openly opposes us in some way. Paul says we should treat such people with kindness and gentleness looking to the spiritual realities of their own bondage with the hope that they might become believers too.

The final category is what is often described as spiritual warfare. Certainly the enemy does not want us to be advancing God’s purpose and He will seek to oppose us. But the clear teaching in Ephesians 6 is that this should not frighten us or cause us to turn back. We should move forward in the Lord’s strength.

### **Practical Exercises:**

1. Memorize Ephesians 6: 10 – 19. As you encounter difficulty, consider if there is some spiritual force at work against you. Pray for God to work and fill your mind with the truths in this passage.
2. Ask the Lord to help you learn the practice of walking in the Spirit. (Galatians 5: 16) Approach each day this week with a prayer that God will help you hear him and follow him that day.
3. Pray for the difficult people in your life. Ask the Lord to bless them.

